DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

* **HISTORY**

* **SERVICES**

* **INITIATIVES**

This is a broad overview of the Department's services and activities. Detailed information can be obtained from the Department of Housing Regional or local offices.

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HISTORY OF PUBLIC HOUSING 1900 TO 1995

PERIOD 1900 - 1939

In the early part of the Century, there was no government assistance and no controls for housing.

The Local Government Act, 1906 enforced reasonable building and health standards.

In 1912 the new Housing Board of NSW began a Model Garden Village at Daceyville to provide workmen with healthy, economical homes.

During the depression in the 1930s thousands of people were homeless and unemployed.

The 'Homes for Unemployed Trust' established in 1934, assisted people to obtain subsidised housing

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PERIOD 1940's

The Housing Commission commenced operations in 1942 taking over the functions of the Housing Improvement Board, the Homes for Unemployed Trust and the administration of the Dacey Garden and Erskineville estates. The first houses constructed during that year were at Bathurst and Orange for munitions workers at nearby factories.

In the 1940's the Housing Commission could not satisfy the demand for housing following World War II and converted wartime establishments to provide emergency housing. Applicants for emergency housing were accommodated at community housing centres and applicants for rental housing were admitted to a ballot if they met eligibility criteria

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PERIOD 1950's

Despite shortages of building materials the Commission commenced a massive building program using materials such as fibro and timber and imported prefabricated homes.

In the 1950's the Housing Commission offered homes for sale through the Rural Bank. Purchasers were required to pay a minimum deposit of 50 pounds at an interest rate of 4.5% over 45 years. This program was restricted in 1972 when it was decided the Commission should not sell assets that could not be replaced.

PERIOD 1960's

During the 1960's the Commission built homes on large estates such as Green Valley and Mt Druitt. At Green Valley 6,000 dwellings to house some 25,000 residents were constructed, including walk-up flats and special housing for aged persons. At Mt Druitt 8,000 dwellings were completed housing over 32,000 people.

Further slum clearance activities continued in the 1960's at Redfern and Waterloo making way for the inner city high rises developments. 'John Northcott Place' at Surry Hills, the largest multi-storey project yet undertaken was completed as part of the slum rehabilitation program.

PERIOD 1970's

Whilst Aboriginal people had always been eligible for public housing, a specific Housing for Aborigines Program commenced in 1970 to build houses throughout the State.

In country areas considerable residential building was carried out. Expansion of local industries and decentralisation of industries from Sydney created a demand for Public Housing in cities and towns.

PERIOD 1970's

The Commission continued building on broad acre estates, slum clearance and re-construction work in Redfern and Waterloo. The increasing costs involved in providing services to the major, large housing estates meant a greater emphasis had to be placed on new type medium density housing.

In 1975 the Commission reported that 29% of its dwellings under construction in Sydney were in various forms of medium density housing (presently 80% of the Department of Housing's construction is medium density).

PERIOD 1970's

In 1975, following negotiations between the Commonwealth, NSW State Government and Sydney City Council, the Commonwealth Government granted 17 million dollars toward the redevelopment of the Woolloomooloo basin by the Commission.

By 1979 a total of 123 new and rehabilitated dwellings were completed and the Commission's redevelopment program had won 6 major awards.

PERIOD 1970's

In 1978 the Commission commenced a new construction 'Sirius' at The Rocks comprising 62 apartments and 17 units for aged people. The site, known as Bunkers Hill, offered future residents magnificent views of Circular Quay, the Opera House and Sydney Harbour.

When completed, former 'Rocks' residents received preference in the allocation of units.

PERIOD 1980's

The use of private builders to design and build public rental housing introduced greater variety to the location and style of homes. New public rental housing was no longer identifiable.

The focus on large housing estates decreased and the Commission (later on, the Department) concentrated on revitalising housing and communities in inner and near city areas at Woolloomooloo, Waterloo, Daceyville, Glebe and Millers Point.

PERIOD 1980's

In January, 1986 the Department of Housing was formed amalgamating the Housing Commission of NSW and the Land Commission of NSW (Landcom).

The new Department also took over the administration of home purchase assistance programs and the Mortgage Relief Scheme.

The Department worked towards improving housing services for people with physical, intellectual and psychiatric disability.

Homes were purchased and modified for new tenants and modifications were carried out for existing tenants.

PERIOD 1980's

The Department became involved in a number of major initiatives with joint venture partners to improve housing choices for older people.

Major projects included Dougherty Apartments, Chatswood; Peakhurst Retirement Village, Peakhurst; Leigh Place, Roselands; Camden Lodge, Camden and Abbeyfield at Orange.

PERIOD 1990's

The 1990's have seen the most significant advances in the Departments' history with major reforms and fundamental changes in every area.

Through a major restructure the Department has shed many of the extra functions it had acquired during the 1980's. The Department's new direction and focus concentrates on the provision and management of public housing for those clients most in need.

The Department's vision is that it will be the most innovative and effective housing provider in Australia.

WHAT IS PUBLIC HOUSING AND HOW TO APPLY

WHAT IS PUBLIC HOUSING?

Public Housing is government-owned housing that is rented to low and moderate income earners. The cost of providing public housing is shared by the Commonwealth and each State Government, under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

The Department of Housing is responsible for building and managing public housing in New South Wales.

The Department of Housing now manages over 130,000 houses and flats.

HOW TO APPLY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

To apply for public housing you must complete an Application for Housing form or an Immediate Housing Assistance form.

To be eligible for public housing you must be:

i) an Australian citizen or have permanent residency

ii) a resident of New South Wales

iii) within income limits

WHAT TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION ARE AVAILABLE?

The Department has a range of different types of accommodation including flats, villas, townhouses, separate houses and bedsitting room apartments, that will suit your needs.

HOW LONG WILL I HAVE TO WAIT FOR HOUSING?

After your name is placed on the Department's public housing waiting list you will wait in turn for suitable accommodation in the area of your choice.

The waiting time for accommodation depends on:

- the type of housing and area requested
- the number of vacancies or new construction

WAIT TURN HOUSING

The substantial majority of applicants for public housing will wait for their name to reach the top of the waiting list when an offer of accommodation will be made providing they are still eligible. Refer to page 7 for Immediate Housing Assistance and Priority Housing.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY TURN IS NEAR?

When your turn for an offer is reached, the Department will notify you of the location of the dwelling. You will be able to inspect the dwelling, and arrangements will be made for you to sign the Tenancy Agreement.

IMMEDIATE HOUSING ASSISTANCE

If you apply for and are approved for immediate housing assistance, the Department can offer either priority housing or rental assistance.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Rental Assistance is provided to help establish or maintain accommodation in the private rental market. It can also be provided to help you move to more affordable housing.

The most usual form of assistance is a rental bond, but assistance may also be provided to pay rental arrears, advance rent, electricity/gas connection fee and removal costs. It will also pay for short-term, temporary accommodation for natural disasters such as fires etc or for someone escaping domestic violence.

You will be expected to provide some contribution to these costs.

PRIORITY HOUSING

If you are approved for immediate housing assistance and the need for urgent public housing outside the normal 'wait turn' basis has been established, the Department will make you an offer of public housing ahead of those on the waiting list.

You will be offered accommodation considered suitable for your needs, but not necessarily in your area of choice.

RENTAL SUBSIDIES

The Department's policy is to assist people on very low incomes by limiting the amount of rental they pay based upon the household income. Over 90% of public tenants receive subsidies to ensure they only pay between 20-25% of the total household income in rent.

PRIORITY REHOUSING

Department of Housing tenants who may need to move to another public housing dwelling can apply for priority rehousing. For further information visit your local Client Service Office.

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

The Mutual Exchange program is a computer register operated by the Department of Housing to assist its tenants find accommodation more suited to their needs by exchanging their home with another Department tenant.

You can nominate three locations in which the Department has accommodation.

TEMPORARY EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Temporary tenancies may be arranged in either public or private housing for people who are homeless through fire, flood or other crisis.

FREE INTERPRETER SERVICES

The Department of Housing provides Free Language Assistance, including deaf sign/Auslan, to customers through the use of professional interpreters and the Telephone Interpreter Service.

In addition, Departmental staff with community language skills are available to assist those in need.

CLIENT SERVICE TEAMS

Client Service Teams are located in local Department of Housing offices.

Client Service Officers can handle all inquiries concerning applications for public housing, Rental Assistance, rent payments, maintenance and repairs, requests for rehousing, requests for urgent housing and rental rebate assessments.

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

The Department of Housing's program of acquiring and modifying accommodation allows people who have a disability greater housing choices.

The location of housing is particularly important for people with a disability. The Department makes every effort to ensure that applicants with a disability, who have waited their turn, are housed in their preferred location.

If no suitable housing exists, the Department may rent, buy or modify a dwelling in the preferred location or a temporary rental subsidy may apply.

HOME MODIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE SCHEME

This scheme allows people in the private sector including those in home ownership to remain in their accommodation with the assistance of minor modifications including handrails, ramps, etc.

There is a small charge for this service.

HIV/AIDS

A pilot scheme called the Special Rental Subsidy provides applicants with HIV/AIDS who are approved for priority housing, with a subsidy to remain in private rental accommodation.

This subsidy allows people with HIV/AIDS to pay no more than they would in public housing whilst remaining in the private sector and reduces the call for priority housing in areas of high demand.

HOUSING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

People of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent can choose to live either in housing which is part of the Department's housing program or in housing which has been built or purchased under the Department's Housing for Aborigines program (HFA).

HFA homes, which are managed by the Department of Housing, are allocated on a wait/turn basis to people who are of Aboriginal background and who identify as Aboriginal.

PENSIONER HOUSING

The Department provides special accommodation for pensioners over 55 years of age.

The accommodation is specifically designed for the elderly, with features for tenants with mobility problems and disabilities and has easy access for wheelchairs.

Some accommodation is modified for frail tenants.

AWARD WINNING DESIGNS

Dacey Gardens Suburb

DACEYVILLE

Australian Council of National Trusts

Australian Heritage Award -

Certificate of Merit - Contemporary Architecture 1989

Royal Australian Planning Institute

Award for Excellence in Planning 1989

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

National Project Award

Award of Merit - Heritage Category 1990

Award of Merit - Residential Category 1992

Golden Grove Street

NEWTOWN

Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Wilkinson Award for Outstanding Residential Architecture 1987

Recognition of the heritage value of the suburb's setting was required for successful integration of the new and renovated building

Catherine and Mount Vernon Streets

GLEBE

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

National Project Award

Award of Merit - Building Settings Category 1992

The award was made for this innovatively designed pensioner housing development inspired by the Gothic architecture of Glebe's Bishopthorpe

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PEAKHURST RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Housing Industry Association

Excellence in the Provision of

Senior Citizens' Housing 1993

Hostel style support is linked with individual dwellings to give a more independent living style for the frail and/or elderly.

55-59 South Creek Road

DEE WHY

Warringah Council 1993

Urban Design Awards - Commendation 1993

The Department of Housing pensioner development contains one bedroom units clustered around a court, with landscaped gardens.

It has been established as a desirable model for Council to judge other developments.

Walker Street

WATERLOO

Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Lloyd Rees Award for Outstanding Urban Design 1993

Located between Wellington and Phillip Streets this public housing project incorporates new dwelling types based on traditional terraces.

Karimbla Road

MIRANDA

Sutherland Shire Council

Civic Design Award for Medium Density Housing 1994

This attractive contemporary design project is in a very popular and sought after area. It is a good example of Urban Consolidation enabling the Department to increase its accommodation by 100% on this site.

The Kingsway and Pinnacle Street

MIRANDA

H.I.A. Top Homes Award

Award for Medium/High Density Lifestyle

Estates under $150,000

This complex is one of the first to be completed under the Department's redevelopment program. It comprises 30 one bedroom units as well as a well designed community room.

Snowden Avenue

SYLVANIA

Sutherland Shire Council

Civic Design Certificate of Merit for
Medium Density Housing

These nine pensioner units designed in Federation style are a great example of a sympathetic and practical project on a small site.

Aboriginal Housing

TABULAM

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

National Projects Award

Award of Merit

Special Initiatives Category 1994

The Department built over 120 houses for the Aboriginal Land Council in consultation with the Aboriginal community across the State of NSW

Quilkey Street

BULLI

The Builder's Design Association

Design Award 1993

The development is a corner site and is also in an area of historic buildings, so both of these features had to be addressed in the design.

The result is a stepped design with a plain facade which complements its surroundings.

The project contains eight, two-bedroom pensioner units.

IMPROVING PUBLIC HOUSING

The Department of Housing is involved in major urban renewal projects on the large housing estates it created during the 1960's and 1970's.

The re-planning of the suburbs and houses is being done in collaboration with the tenants and local communities to create safer environments with increased privacy for the residents.

As a pilot program involving the Campbelltown housing estates plans have been prepared (in consultation with tenants) to improve the residents social and physical amenities.

LIVING IN HARMONY

YOUR RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ENJOYMENT

As a Department of Housing tenant, you have the right to safety and comfort as well as reasonable peace and privacy, in your home.

If the person interfering with your peace has breached their tenancy agreement and will not change their behaviour, the Department will enforce the provisions of the agreement, even if this means evicting an offender.

If it is a case of irreconcilable differences between tenants, the Department will examine other options.

The Department does expect its clients to be tolerant of people whose lifestyle is not exactly the same as theirs.

REPLACING OLDER STOCK

One of the main aims of the Department of Housing is to achieve sensitive medium density developments in well established areas.

The Redevelopment Program allows the Department to increase its housing by demolishing old houses and redeveloping the under-utilised land which is in established fully serviced areas with easy access to community facilities.

The Redevelopment Program provides housing which addresses the Department's changing client profile and the trend towards smaller households

MAJOR UPGRADING PROGRAM

The Department is undertaking upgrading work to major buildings (mainly high-rise) in the inner areas of Sydney working closely with tenants' representatives to identify possible improvements which residents consider should be given priority.

The work includes structural repairs, upgrading of essential services, installation of security systems, electronic keycard access to car parking areas, property boundary fencing and security lighting around apartment buildings.

INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

The Department of Housing is involved in:

- Pilot trials for combination gas hot water and space heating systems
- Smoke detector trials for public housing
- Water conservation devices
- Falls prevention studies
- Adaptable housing designs
- Reduction in hot water scalding
- Non-chemical termite treatment program

PRESERVING THE STATE'S HERITAGE

The Department is committed to preserving the heritage listed buildings that it owns or controls.

Guidelines have been developed by the Department for properties of heritage significance to ensure their ongoing protection, to take advantage of their special features or history and to meet changing community needs.